

Talking Points  
MSWIN demonstration  
Saturday, August 29, 2009  
Gulfport

This is the first public demonstration of a new wireless emergency communications network designed to allow officials and first responders to communicate quickly and effectively in times of crisis.

Four years ago today, we quickly discovered that Hurricane Katrina had obliterated communications systems not only along the Gulf Coast but also far inland.

First responders were unable to talk to each other except face-to-face, which was disastrous in and of itself as everyone was trying to get help to people who needed it immediately

Today, I am pleased to report to the people of Mississippi, we are developing a reliable, sustainable new system designed to vastly improve the ability of law enforcement and emergency personnel to share information during natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina and other emergencies.

The bottom line is MSWIN will save lives and provide critical communications to state agencies and local first responders.

We're staging this demonstration today from the emergency operations center at the National Guard Headquarters in Gulfport, which would serve as the state's forward operations center during an actual Gulf Coast emergency.

We're connecting to agents of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, who are on duty in the Gulf of Mexico; the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency and Mississippi Department of Public Safety about 160 miles to

the north in Jackson; and the Jackson County Emergency Operations Center about 40 miles to the east in Pascagoula.

So far, the system has been built out from the Coast to Jackson, with work continuing to complete it statewide.

This has been a priority of mine since Hurricane Katrina, and I note this demonstration coincides with the fourth anniversary of that terrible event.

At my request, the Mississippi Legislature recognized the benefits of MSWIN and passed legislation approving the network and initial funding.

Currently the contracted \$162 million implementation cost of MSWIN has been fully funded through both state and federal appropriations.

I especially want to thank Senator Thad Cochran for including money for this project in a federal appropriations bill; and the entire Mississippi Congressional delegating supporting it.

The state selected Motorola as the vendor for the project, and the contract was executed in June 2007. Construction is planned in three phases. The recently completed Phase 1 covers the lower third of the state and includes a total of 44 tower sites.

Phase II, primarily central Mississippi, will include 52 sites. Phase III, the upper third of the state, will include 47 sites.

Today's demonstration follows a recent pilot program in which law enforcement officials in five Mississippi counties field tested the network. Using equipment provided by the vendor, 30 various agencies in Perry, George, Pearl River, Stone and Wayne counties utilized the network over a 30-day period.

Follow-up evaluations show that 27 of the 30 said the system performed either excellent or very good, and three felt the coverage was good and met expectations. As for voice quality, 93 percent graded it excellent or very good, while the remaining seven percent graded it as good.